

## Windbreaks Come to Life at Mountain Home Air Force Base

The Aberdeen, Idaho Plant Materials Center, operated by the United States Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service, just completed the second year of windbreak installation at the Mountain Home Air Force Base.

The Plant Materials Center and the Air Force joined forces in 1990 when a test site was established at the Base to test the adaptability of trees and shrubs to southwest Idaho. Based upon the cooperative work and the technical expertise from the Plant Materials Center, the Air Force requested assistance with the planning and installation of windbreaks at the Base. A cooperative agreement was developed between the Air Force and the Plant Materials Center in 1995 to install approximately 54,000 running feet of windbreak over a 4 year period, beginning in 1996.

The Plant Materials center developed alternative planting plans and the Air Force chose to install 5 row windbreaks consisting of Siberian peashrub, Rocky Mountain juniper, Robust poplar, Austrian pine, and 'Shuberts' chokecherry. The Air Force also decided to have the Plant Materials Center install weed barrier fabric to help conserve soil moisture and to control weeds. A drip irrigation system was also installed.

In 1996, windbreaks were established near the Hospital, the new Shoppette, and along the west side of the Main Gate. According to Loren St. John, Soil Conservationist at the Plant Materials Center, "many of the deciduous trees and shrubs grew 18 to 24 inches during the first growing season. The evergreens are slower growing but provide year-round protection from the wind because they don't shed their leaves".

This spring during the week of March 17, 11,960 running feet of windbreak were installed. Windbreaks were established near the FAMCAMP and the Skeet Range. According to St. John, "in about 5 years the windbreaks will be providing good protection from the wind and will make living and working on the Base a more pleasant experience".

The Plant Materials Center at Aberdeen is part of a national plant materials program operated by the Natural Resources Conservation Service. The purpose of the Plant Materials Center is to develop and communicate new technology for the use and management of plants to conserve soil and protect water quality and to evaluate and release plant materials for conservation use.

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